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Pitegoff Starts New Community Economic Development Clinic

Wherever he has confronted the scourge of poverty and unemployment — whether in the impoverished backwoods of North Carolina, the urban slums of Oakland, Calif., the aging industrial areas of New England or the heart of Buffalo's inner city — Peter R. Pitegoff has refused to walk away. Instead, he has attacked some of its root causes by devising imaginative new ways to infuse jobs and vitality into weakened sectors of the economy.

Pitegoff joined the UB Law faculty last year as an associate professor. He immediately went to work to establish a community economic development law clinic, opened last fall. In conjunction with the clinics in low-income housing development and small business counseling, the program enables UB Law students to gain direct experience in a variety of legal areas involved in counseling new business enterprises, creating new jobs, advising community and non-profit organizations and generating capital for community economic ventures.

Pitegoff points out that the new clinics inculcate the business law skills most corporate lawyers acquire only long after law school. In addition, students learn to plan and implement solutions — not just react to problems.

"It's an opportunity for students to work in community development across a spectrum of law," Pitegoff says. "After all, much of what is called community economic development law is basically corporate law, tax planning, corporate finance, employee stock ownership plans and labor law. These are all areas of significant change today and they all are challenging to a professor as well as to students."

Helping worker-owned businesses to get off the ground is an area of special ex-

"There's a tradition in the school of valuing new ideas. And Buffalo is a city that has great potential for creative community development."

pertise, and he is also conducting a simulation seminar in worker ownership transactions. In the classroom, students role-play, enacting four business transactions involving employee ownership.

"The clinical possibilities are practically endless," he says. For example, students can choose to work in a community-labor coalition that is searching for creative ways to avert a plant shutdown. Or they may help to organize a community-based venture capital fund. Their legal experiences could entail financial restructuring options, third-party purchases, bankruptcy reorganization, as well as structuring government support initiatives.

A 1975 graduate of Brown University, Pitegoff realized during the mid-1970s that he wanted to study law. By the time he joined the Law School faculty, he had added impressive legal credentials to his resume: guest instructor at Harvard Law School, adjunct assistant professor at New York University Law School, his alma mater, and general counsel to the Indus-

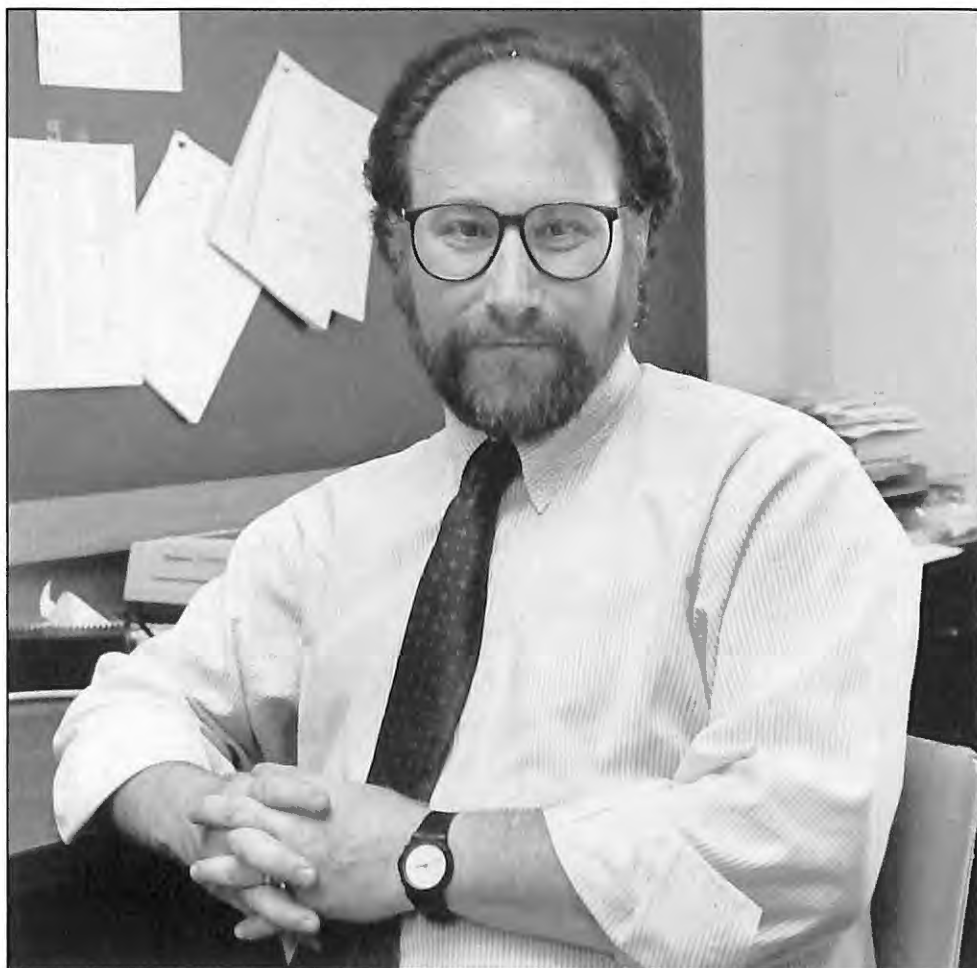
trial Cooperative Association (ICA) in Somerville, Mass., a national consulting firm for employee ownership of business. As general counsel to the ICA, he provided a wide range of legal and consulting services to worker-owned businesses throughout the country and assisted community organizations and unions.

While living in Boston from 1981 to 1988, he was a principal author of a Massachusetts corporate statute (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 157A) that helped to pave the way for worker ownership of businesses, a statute that served as a model for many other states, including New York.

In Boston, Pitegoff practiced law with the firm of Arrington & Pitegoff, P.C. His law practice dealt with economic development and business law, and he was counsel to labor unions, community organizations, governments, small businesses and cooperatives. He is an expert on employee and corporate structure and has published numerous articles on the subject.

After graduating from Brown and teaching high school in Providence, R.I., Pitegoff undertook community organizing — and it was that interest that took him to North Carolina and later to Oakland. In North Carolina, the "city kid from New York" worked on grass-roots organizing for economic and civil rights in rural black communities. In Oakland, he helped inner-city neighborhoods to gain better city services as well as statewide tax reform.

He later attended New York University Law School, where he held a prestigious Root-Tilden Scholarship. He received his J.D. from NYU Law School in 1981 and immediately afterward was awarded a grant from the Public Interest Law Foundation. As a guest lecturer at Harvard University Law School, Pitegoff devised a



Professor Peter R. Pitegoff

simulation seminar on "Working Ownership of Enterprises." At NYU Law School, he taught a specialized course in "Non-Litigatory Forms of Public Interest Advocacy."

In a January 1985 article he wrote for *Law & Policy*, a publication of the Baldy Center at UB Law, Pitegoff wrote of his legal practice and especially the Industrial Cooperative Association: "Working closely with business analysts, economists, educators and organizers, I integrate law with other disciplines and practice corporate law from a labor perspective."

Among the courses he has taught at UB are "Legal Profession," which examines the role of the lawyer in society and deals with codes of professional conduct. He also taught a Community Development

seminar.

As a practicing attorney, Pitegoff found myriad ways to unite law with his natural inclination to tackle difficult social and economic problems. As a UB Law faculty member, he has found a welcome academic atmosphere for his extensive practical background in economic development law and looks forward to being able to pursue his plans for research, scholarship and publication.

"One of the fascinating aspects of this university, one of the things that most attracted me, was its inviting environment," Pitegoff says. "I'm impressed by the nature of the faculty, a diverse group of truly talented people. There's a tradition in the school of valuing new ideas. And Buffalo is a city that has great potential for creative community development." ■

UB Law Reaches Out to Community

Numerous community groups are participating in the Law School's Community Economic Development Law Clinic. These include the Urban Initiatives Commission, the Jubilee Community Loan Fund, the Recycling Task Force, the Niagara Gateway Association and the Precious Jewel Daycare Center.

The Urban Initiatives Commission, to which Professor Peter R. Pitegoff was appointed by the Buffalo Common Council, is a think tank that focuses on policy directions for addressing the poverty problem in the city. In this vein, he also is working with leaders of the African-American community and leaders in economic development, including the Greater Buffalo Development Foundation's Working Group on Minority Economic Development.

The Jubilee Community Loan Fund is a unique effort at alternative lending. Pitegoff and clinic students are playing a key organizing role in starting the alternative lending institution, which will support community development with funds raised from charitable and private sources. Among those also participating in the Jubilee Fund are religious and community leaders. The fund was incorporated in the spring with the participation of clinic students from the Small Business Counseling Clinic.

The Precious Jewel Daycare Center, which is scheduled to open in Buffalo's East Side in the near future, is negotiating the maze of legal requirements for operating a day care center, with the help of clinic students.

Clinic students are assisting Citizen Action of New York on initial structuring and feasibility assessment for recycling enterprises in the City of Buffalo.

In working with the Niagara Gateway Association, Pitegoff anticipates that legal counsel would be made available to small business owners in Hispanic and Italian inner-city neighborhoods. ■